

Dear Darryl,

Thank you for once again writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked us an interesting and difficult question. You wanted to know if the judgment of false teachers mentioned in 2 Peter 2:3, 12, 13, 14, and 17 was in the past or is in the future. You also asked if the descriptions of their punishments are a picture of their first death or a reference to their second death.

Because Peter speaks of “swift” destruction for false teachers, he most likely had in mind the judgments coming upon Judea that he knew would come to the generation that heard the warnings of Jesus himself (Matthew 24:34). The warning is very similar to that in the Book of Jude. In Jude 14 and 15, the apostle tells about the Lord coming with his saints to execute judgment on the ungodly. Perhaps James had the same thought in mind when he said, “The Judge is standing at the door” (James 5:9). These apostles served mostly Jewish brethren and they may have had in mind the impending judgment on Jerusalem.

Jude sheds further light on the fate of false teachers living at the end of the Gospel Age. He indicates they never possessed the holy spirit. “They [the apostles] said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’ These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.” (Jude 18-19) If these scriptures mean these individuals never had the holy spirit, then they would presumably be recovered during the Millennium. However, 2 Peter 2:20-21 has language that suggests at least some of them had been enlightened. If they were enlightened in the fullest way, they could be subject to a harsher punishment, perhaps second death. But it is doubtful that all the false leaders Peter had in mind were enlightened in the fullest way. Therefore, we believe most will be judged during the earthly phase of the Kingdom, the Millennium. Because they lived ungodly lives, they will have very difficult lessons to learn and will require severe discipline. In the end, they may not choose to practice righteousness and write it on their hearts. That being the case, they will then fall into second death.

We hope we have helped you to some extent with your question. Please write us again.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio